



90

**MODERN  
BELGIAN  
WOOD-  
ENGRAVERS**  
by jan-albert goris

**BELGIAN GOVERNMENT INFORMATION CENTER  
NEW YORK**

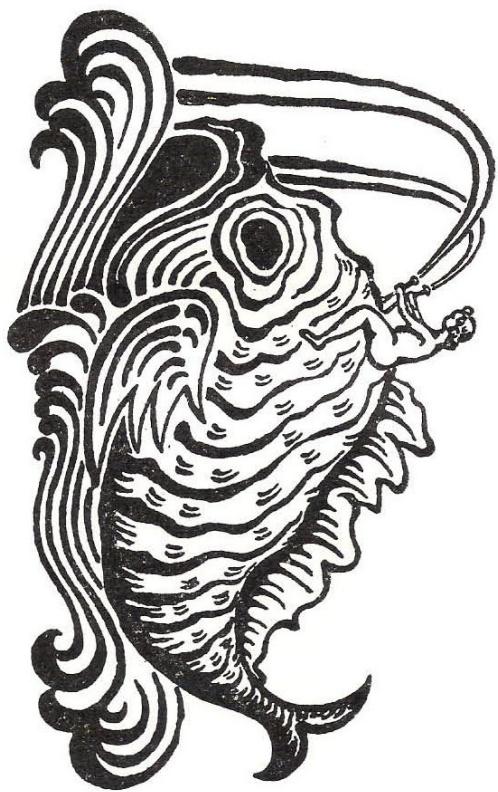
ART, LIFE AND SCIENCE IN BELGIUM, SECOND SERIES,  
No. 3

# MODERN BELGIAN WOOD ENGRAVERS

Already published in this series:

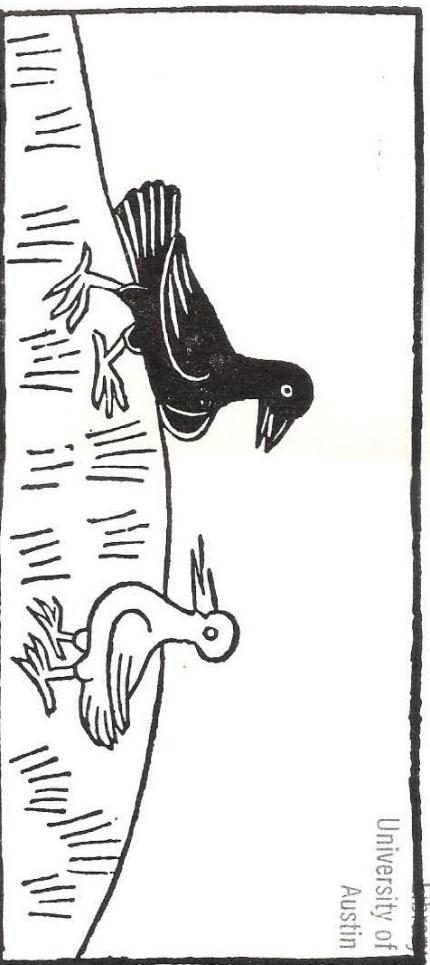
1. THE BELGIAN CONGO APPRAISED
2. BELGIUM AND CURRENT WORLD PROBLEMS
3. ART TREASURES OF BELGIUM, II, by *Marguerite Devigne*

by  
Jan-Albert Goris (Maurice  
Gijssen)



*2nd Edition*

Belgian Government Information Center  
630 Fifth Avenue, New York 20, N.Y.  
1954



The author, Dr. Jan-Albert Goris, has published a number of books on historical, artistic and literary subjects in Dutch, French and English.

Since 1941, he has been Commissioner of

Information for Belgium in the U.S.A.

His publications in English are: *Belgium in Bondage* (New York, 1943), *Strangers Should Not Whisper* (New York, 1945), *Belgium* (University of California Press, 2nd edition, 1946), *Belgian Letters* (New York, 1946), *The Growth of the Belgian Nation* (New York, 1946), *Rubens in America*, with Julius S. Held (New York, 1947), *Modern Sculpture in Belgium* (New York, 1948). *Portraits by Flemish Masters in American Collections* (New York, 1949).

MAY 6 1955 *Gift of Publ*

## INTRODUCTION

IN our days, the art of wood engraving and woodcutting is a protest against commercialism and an assertion that the technique of the wood engraver or the woodcutter is an art in itself. Mechanical reproduction of facsimiles has achieved a wide popular success because of its rapidity and fidelity, but the aim of the wood engraver is not correctly to reproduce a drawing or a painting. Even if he is inspired by either of these, he will not reproduce them, but interpret them in his own way and according to the possibilities and limitations of the techniques of his art. For wood engraving has its own laws and its own style. It is as personal an art as painting and as sculpture. Eric Gill has eloquently pointed out the degradation of the artistic values in modern process reproduction as follows: "In the matter of drawing and illustration and engraving, degradation is inevitable when one man draws, another touches up the drawing, another photographs, another

The wood engravings reproduced in the introduction are taken from the *Dialogus Creaturarum*, Antwerp, 1486.

709410

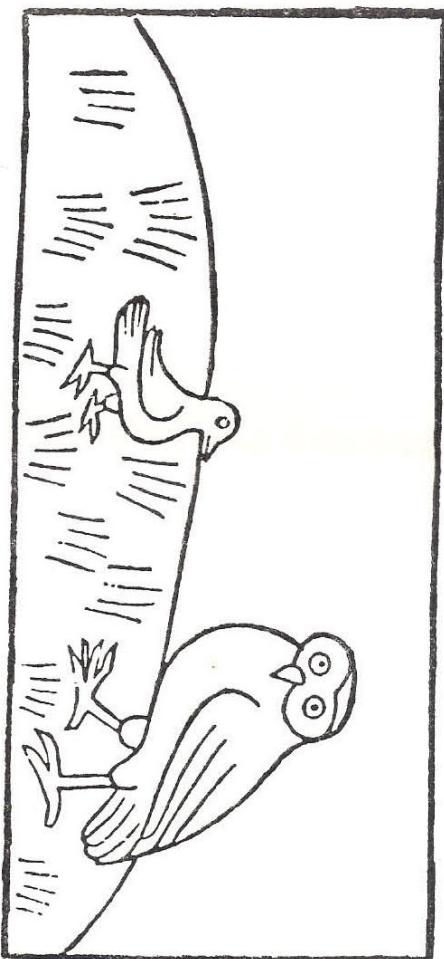
touches up the negative, another etches, another touches up the etching, another routs it, another mounts it, another proves it and another keeps the accounts and to crown it all, another takes the profits.”<sup>1</sup> To make a woodcut, the artist should be alone with his piece of wood and half a dozen tools.

When wood engraving originated in the 16th century in Italy and in the Low Countries, it was not imitative of any art nor did it try to follow the rules of any other technique. Its limitations were obvious, but they were its strength, not its weakness. The early wood engravers never tried to imitate nature; they did not endeavor to reproduce a human face or figure with that passion for painful accuracy which was the characteristic of the Primitive Flemish painters, although technically they would have been able to approach such a detailed reproduction. The temptation to be imitative, and by so doing betray the very nature of their art, may have been minimized by the fact that the first engravings (those used for block books — series of images representing scenes from the Bible) were intended for the rudimentary needs of the ordinary people. But, even in the 16th century, when wood engraving became to a certain extent a handmaiden to drawing, the engraver was aware of the true nature of his art. In the absence of photographic means of reproduction, he interpreted rather than imitated the drawings and paintings of Dürer, of Breughel, and of many others. He proudly signed his name, for he was conscious of being a creative artist. Later on copper engraving, substituted itself for woodcutting or engraving and the latter art became less and less important. It served to a certain extent in the 19th century as a cheaper medium to repro-

duce a design rapidly and in large numbers, but under the pressure of other techniques which gave more exact results, wood engravers became more and more imitative and swerved farther and farther away from the real nature of their art, until the photographic processes punished these betrayers of an old craft by putting them out of business.

Wood engraving, for a long time, became a lost art, practiced only sporadically by eccentrics who were looking backward, dreaming of an atmosphere in which the craftsman would express his individuality as a protest against the commercialization of reproductive techniques. The initiative of William Morris, the work of Beardsley were meritorious efforts to revive a neglected art. It was highly improbable, however, that a few obstinate artists pitted against the desire of the public for faithful portrayals of persons and events could succeed unless these artists, by their work, proved that woodcutting was an art in itself.

It is a fact not devoid of significance, and not a mere chronological coincidence, that wood engraving as an art revived on a large scale after the first World War. It is also remarkable that it revived through the efforts of the



(1) Beedham, R. J., *Wood Engraving*, with an introduction and appendix by Eric Gill, Faber & Faber, Ltd., London, 1921, 1938.

artists of northern and western Europe. Of its very nature, it is a northern art: even when it was in its infancy, this was noticeable. The wood engravings of the Italians of the 15th century are all purely linear: the only black portions are the outlines of the people and buildings represented. The general impression these works give is one of meagerness: they often look like reproductions of pen drawings, whereas, from the start, the northern artist understood the use he could make of the strong opposition between black and white.

When the revival of wood engraving started after the first World War the watchword given to the artists was: "Start engraving with an ax": in other words, "Make the opposition between black and white as violent as possible. Let it be understood that what you make is a wood engraving and not a pen drawing." An artistic revolution, even a small scale one like this, could not succeed if the artist did not go back to the essentials. Time has proved that this was indeed a wise attitude and that the age-old temptation to transform wood engraving into a substitute for drawing was still on the loose.

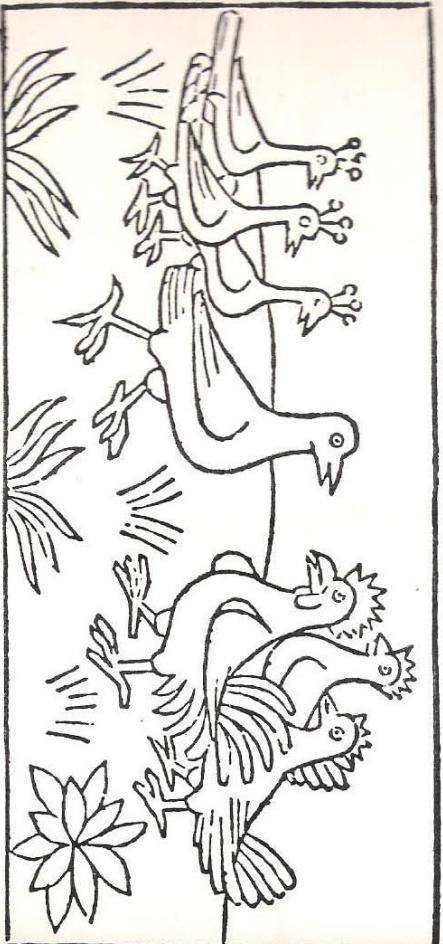
There is only one way to find out how good a wood engraving or a woodcut is: it should look as much as possible like a woodcut. Even wood engraving may be considered as a deviation from the very nature of the art because its results may lead to confusion. A woodcut should not look like a pen drawing, an etching, or a lithograph: above all, it should not look like a painting in black and white. It should look like itself, according to its own nature and the material used. All the rest is pure acrobatics, doing a thing the difficult way.

The very essence of a woodcut is strength: by using his tool, forcefully and without effeminacy, the artist extracts from the surface a light enhanced by the surround-

ing darkness. In a pen drawing, such a procedure would seem facile and could be rhetorical; in a woodcut it is not, because essentially the artist is confronted with a dark surface. His only means of expressing himself consists in that violent opposition of two strong colors, black and white, of light and darkness. Being reduced to such an exiguity of artistic means, wood engraving is in essence a pauper's art, or, rather, a popular art. Its language is simple, direct and uncompromising — at least, it should be. It is, therefore, not at all astonishing that the renaissance of wood engraving in Western Europe, and especially in Belgium, was due to economic causes. During and after World War I, the artists in Belgium and in France suffered from the scarcity of materials. They published art reviews which could not afford to reproduce etchings: they became craftsmen again. At first, they resorted to a new medium, linoleum. It was cheap and easy to handle. It required a strong composition and, through its very nature, eliminated the possibility of meagerness. A delicate linear design was practically excluded in this material, but it helped the artist to find out that woodcutting, for which lino-art was only a temporary and inexpensive substitute, was based on principles entirely different from those which determine drawing and etching. When dealing with linoleum, it was easy to draw "with an ax," as the art critics of the time recommended. When living became somewhat easier, many of the artists, who had learned their craft by trial and error in cheap material, were well equipped to bring wood engraving to a new and amazing flowering.

As a matter of fact, the facsimile reproductive process had never entirely killed off the art of woodcutting and engraving in Belgium. Even an artist as refined in his technique as *Félicien Rops*, the most capable engraver the

country produced in the 19th century, used this medium for the illustration of some of his early writings. His drawings were probably engraved by a craftsman, but under his direct control. When, in the nineties, the influence of the English craftsmen made itself felt, a few artists in Belgium tried to revive what was considered a lost art. Men like *Georges Minne*, a sculptor, and *Ch. Doudelet* illustrated the poems of Maurice Maeterlinck but, unable to handle the gouge themselves, they made drawings to be engraved by artisans. However, they had a clear understanding of what a wood engraving should be and drew accordingly. Their work was inspired by the early Italian linear wood engravings and by the gothic woodcuts with which they were familiar through the many illustrated books of the 15th and 16th centuries published in the Low Countries (see pp. 3, 4, 5, 7). About the same time, *Henry van de Velde*, who took a prominent part in the renovation of applied arts and architecture in Europe, tried his hand at woodcutting and produced that exemplary page, "The Thistle" (see p. 2). As in every other field in which he chose to be active — and they were many, — he did excellent work. Working more along traditional lines, but



still with a sound understanding of the nature of their craft, *Edward Pellens* and his pupil *Jan Claessens* kept the tradition going.

At the same time, *Max Elskamp*, a delicate poet whose work was inspired by local folklore although transcending it, started to illustrate his publications with woodcuts exactly in the vein of his poems. The discussion whether these cuts were excellent or just interesting is still open, but there is no doubt that they were novel and faithful to the spirit of the art of woodcutting. They contrasted favorably with the work of artists like *Delstanche* (see pp. 14, 15) who although a magnificent craftsman, confused wood engraving and copper engraving with pen-drawing. Elskamp's work was genuine and inspiring.

The first World War and its aftermath brought to light the talent of *Frans Masereel*, who was to revolutionize the field. Strangely enough, wood engraving seems to attract, through the possibility of violent effects, those artists who not only have a strong artistic impulse, but who are possessed of a social and revolutionary message as well. Many a wood engraver has started his career as an illustrator of extreme leftist publications. It is quite cer-



tain that Maserel's fame, world-wide and great as it was, spread more easily on account of his strong social convictions. However, the fact that the medium he chose was, after all, of an elementary character, though he achieved through it a signal success, proves that he had mastered his art completely and exploited to the full its possibilities. But Maserel spoke a universal language.

Following in the wake of Maserel, a whole group of woodcutters and engravers sprang up in Belgium. The most outstanding among them were usually called "the big four."<sup>10</sup> They were the brothers *Jan-Frans* and *Jozef Cantré*, *Joris Minne* and *Henri van Straten*. *Jan-Frans Cantré* died young, leaving behind him a tremendous amount of work: forceful and generous cuts illustrating and glorifying the scenery and people of Flanders. *H. van Straten* disappeared during the liberation of his home town, Antwerp, in 1944. He was a powerful, sensuous artist, using a style that was closely related to the best of the 16th century woodcutters.

At present, *Jozef Cantré* is the facile princeps in his art in Belgium. He has a style as personal as Maserel's, but less monotonous, and his work has no social implications — it is purely artistic. Therefore, its appreciation on its own merits is less dangerous. He is always monumental, but, at the same time, he has qualities of tenderness and humor which appear in every one of his works. Adverse to finesse, he works forcefully with strong contrasts and violent forms. Besides many large size pages treating independent subjects, he has illustrated a great number of Dutch and French books, sometimes using color in his prints. It is easy to notice that he is a sculptor of strong personal qualities.

The work of *Joris Minne*, technically very remarkable, is quite different in tone. He is a fantasist, combining ele-

ments of reality with those of the dream. His compositions are always daring in construction, but they are decidedly intellectual in inspiration. A good deal of his work is also illustrative.

It would be a difficult task to establish a classification of the artists at work at present in Belgium. Categories overlap and the artists sometimes change their style. However, in order to facilitate matters, one could propose three main groups. The first would comprise those woodcutters and engravers who lean back to or are inspired by local folklore elements: *Max Elskamp*, *Timmers*, *Maurice Brocas*, whose work often transcends folklore as does the art of *Edgard Tytgat*, a refined, highly individual and delightful illustrator, and a prominent painter. A second group, the strongest in numbers, would encompass the artists of northern inspiration. Although this is a very vague term, it is better than expressionists, because all these artists, such as Maserel, the Cantrés, Minne, van Straten, *Herckenrath* and others, have their own style and do not follow the rules laid down by any school. What they have in common is a dramatic quality and a forcefulness of expression which appeals more to the sensibility of northwestern Europe than to the Latin mind, a higher degree of sensuousness than their other confrères. The third group would comprise those artists like *F. A. Cosyns*, *Daxhelet*, *Denis Martin*, *Ermengem*, etc., whose work is akin to that of the French school of wood engraving. The linear construction of their work is more apparent: while those of the second group could, in fact, all be sculptors, those of the third group seem to be painters.

This classification is a tentative and purely arbitrary one. It is, however, better than one based exclusively on the geographical location of the artists, which, in a small and highly centralized country like Belgium, has hardly

any sense. The illustrations of this booklet will prove the great diversity of personalities and styles in this field.

Limitations in space have prevented the presentation of a complete panorama of woodcutting and wood engraving in Belgium at present. The selection of plates that follows is arranged nearly in chronological order to allow the study of the evolution of the craft from the beginning of the century.

In the history of woodcutting and wood engraving in modern times, the powerful influence of Belgium may not be ignored. The plates will prove this point better than any theoretical explanation.



## ILLUSTRATIONS

HENRY VAN DE VELDE (1863). *The Thistle*.

Van de Velde is the great old man of applied arts in Belgium. At one time, director of the Academy of Weimar, he made important contributions to modern architecture and interior decoration in Western Europe. Only a few of his wood engravings have been published.



BARON GEORGE MINNE (1866-1941). *Illustration for poems by M. Maeterlinck.*

Maeterlinck published his volume of poetry, "Serres Chaudes" in 1889. The drawings of G. Minne, engraved by an artisan, are conceived in a purely archaic style of great dignity and simplicity.



HARON GEORGE MINNE: *The Baptism of Christ*.

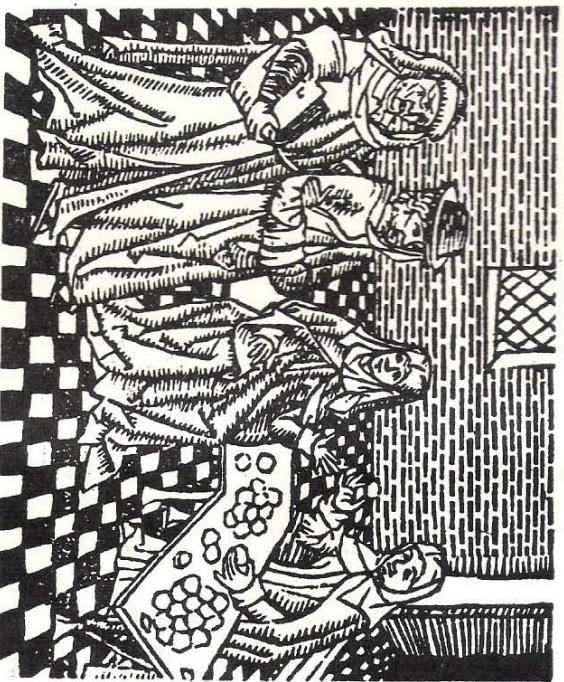
Minne was undoubtedly Belgium's greatest sculptor in modern times. Always influenced by mystic thought, he turned, in his youth, to Gothic art for inspiration. He never engraved on wood, but made several pen drawings, such as the above, which were transferred to wood by capable artisans.



CHARLES DOUDELET (1861-1938). Illustration for "Het Lied van Heer Halewyn."

This woodcut, in which influence of the Italian school may be seen, illustrates a medieval Flemish ballad about Bluebeard, who is finally slain by a brave and enterprising damsel, here leaving her father's castle on her dramatic errand.





BOECK VAN DEN PELGRIM. Antwerp, 1516.

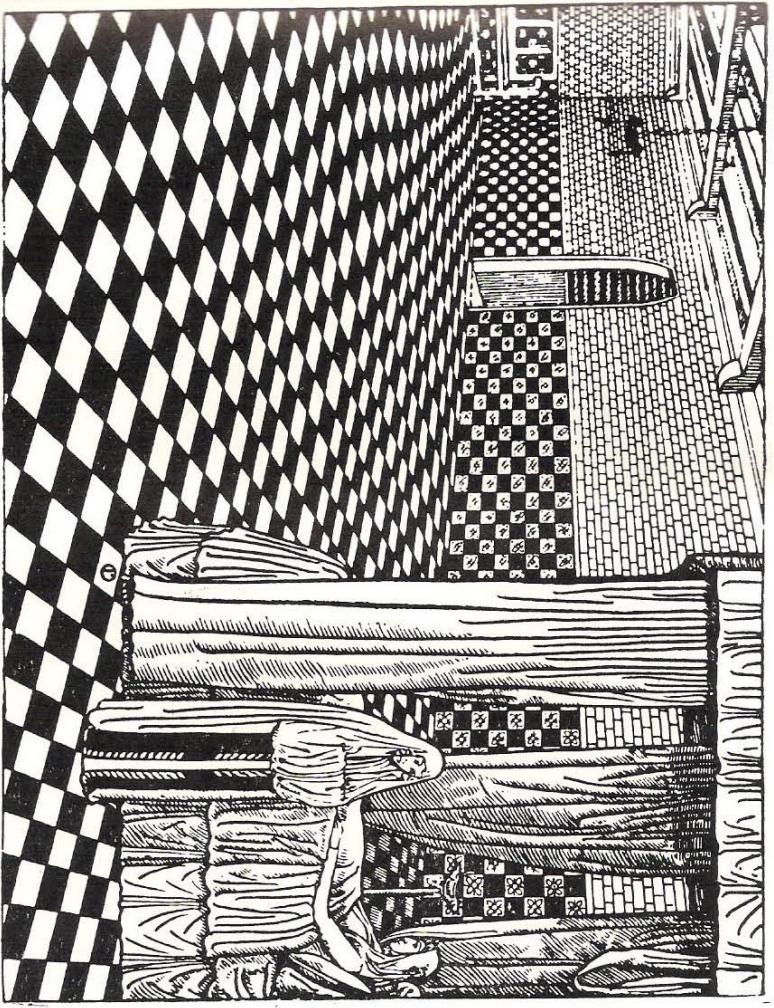
This illustration should be compared with the next one. The comparison brings out some striking resemblance and the existence of permanent elements of inspiration in Flemish wood engraving through the centuries.



CHARLES DOUDELET. Illustration for "Les Douze Chansons," by

Maurice Maeterlinck.

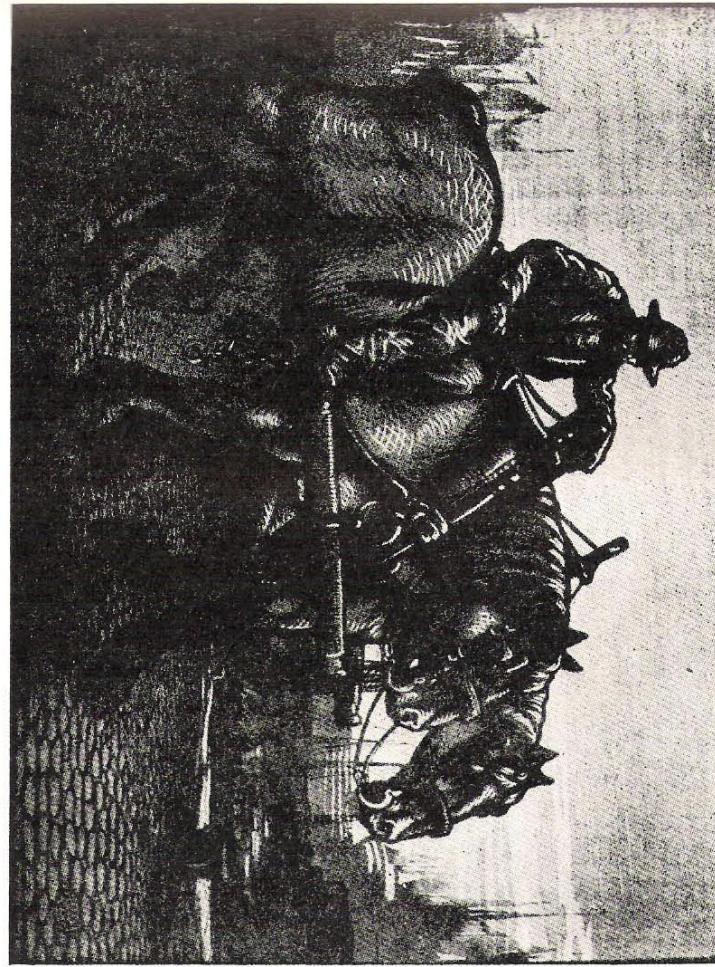
Doudelet studied printing and illustrating in Italy and was the first illustrator to interpret the weird and fantastic poems with which Maeterlinck made his debut. The poet thought very highly of the illustrations and felt that they, more than any others, adequately suggested the mysterious and sad atmosphere of his writings. Although they appeared about 1900, they differed from the imitative and naturalistic tendencies in a most fortunate manner. Some of them were engraved by E. Pellens (see pp. 8, 9). How strongly Doudelet was influenced by the old Flemish woodcuts may be noticed through the comparison of the above woodcut with that to the left taken from G. de Deguileville: *Boeck van den pelgrym*, published in Antwerp in 1516.

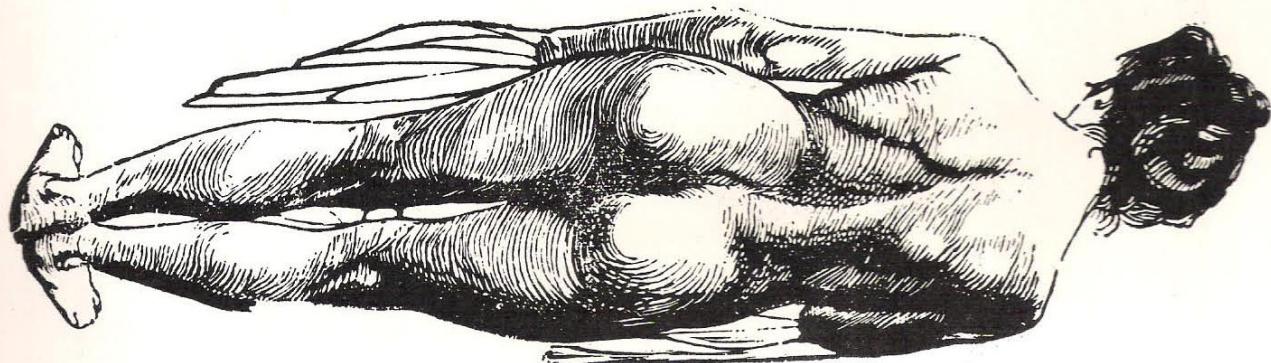


EDWARD PELLENS (1872-1947). *Portrait*.  
Pellems' significance has been somewhat obscured by his conservatism, but the portrait reproduced above shows that he understood the essentials of his art and knew how to express them plainly.



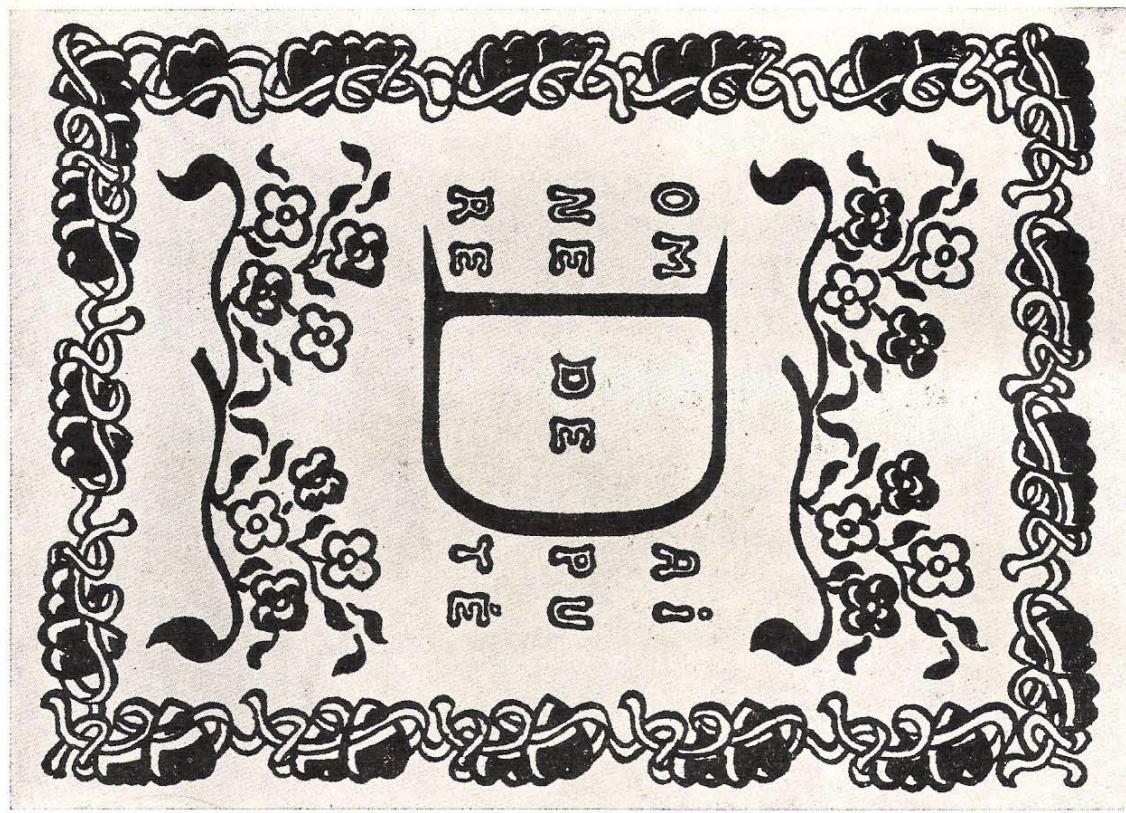
EDWARD PELLENS: *Draft horses*. Color engraving.  
For over thirty years, Pellems taught wood engraving at the Antwerp Academy. He produced a great number of plates devoted to the picturesque aspects of his home town. His technique is traditional. He engraved drawings of Doudlede (see pp. 5, 7).





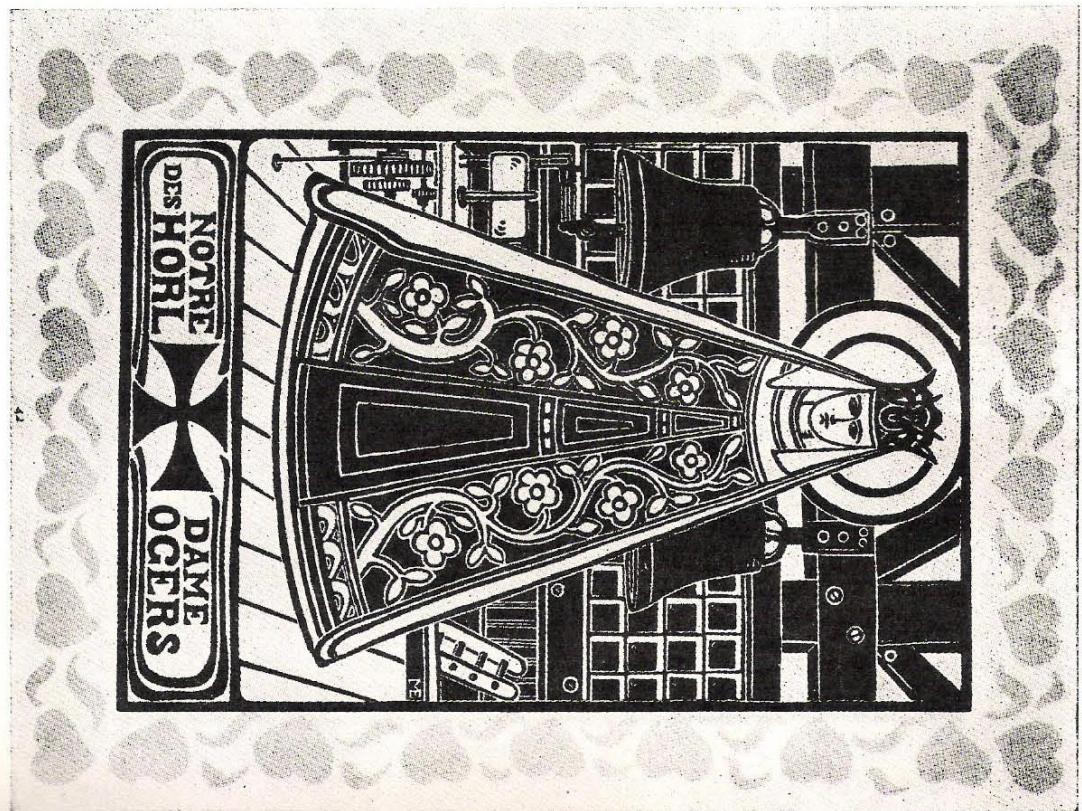
JAN CLAESSENS (1879). *Standing Nude.*  
Claessens' style is akin to that of Pellems, whose pupil he was. He often treated the same subject: the picturesque aspects of his home town, Antwerp, and the human figure.

10



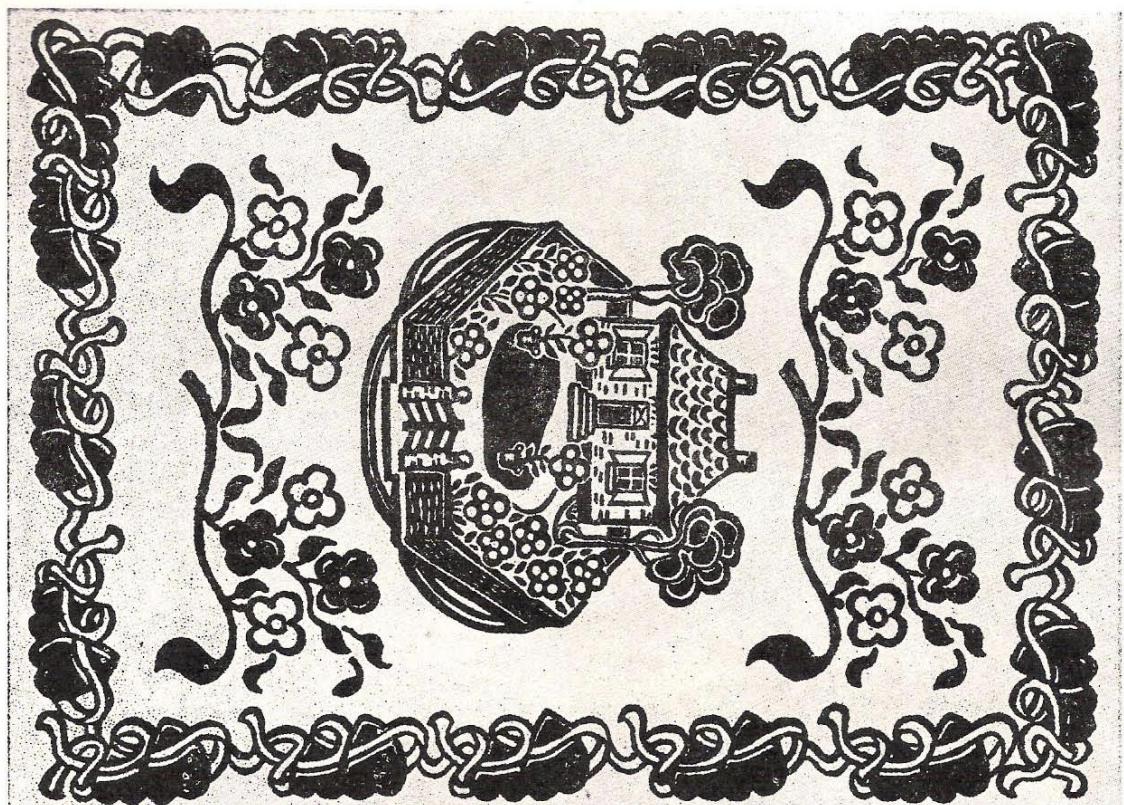
MAX ELSKAMP (1862-1931). *Domaine de Pureté.* Illustration for "L'Alphabet de Notre-Dame la Vierge." Antwerp, 1901.  
In this booklet, printed only on one side of the page, Eiskamp wrote a kind of litany to the Virgin, using every letter as a pretext for an invocation. This example shows how he distorted the text in order to obtain a constructive effect.

11



MAX ELSKAMP: *Our Lady of the Watchmakers*. Illustration for "Les Sept Notre-Dame des Plus Beaux Métiers," Antwerp, 1923. Color engraving.

Like Timmermans (see p. 19), Elskamp used to illustrate his own writings. A poet who invented new forms and whose poetry has the antiquated charm of a music box, he was very fond of local folklore. The book to which the above illustration belongs celebrates the Virgin as protectress of seven trades: bricklayers, gardeners, image makers, millers, carpenters and blacksmiths.



MAX ELSKAMP: Illustration for "L'Alphabet de Notre-Dame la Vierge." Antwerp, 1901.

Elskamp's significance in the rebirth of wood engraving in Belgium is more historical than esthetic. However, he liberated himself of archaic influences and leaned heavily on folklore for his inspiration.

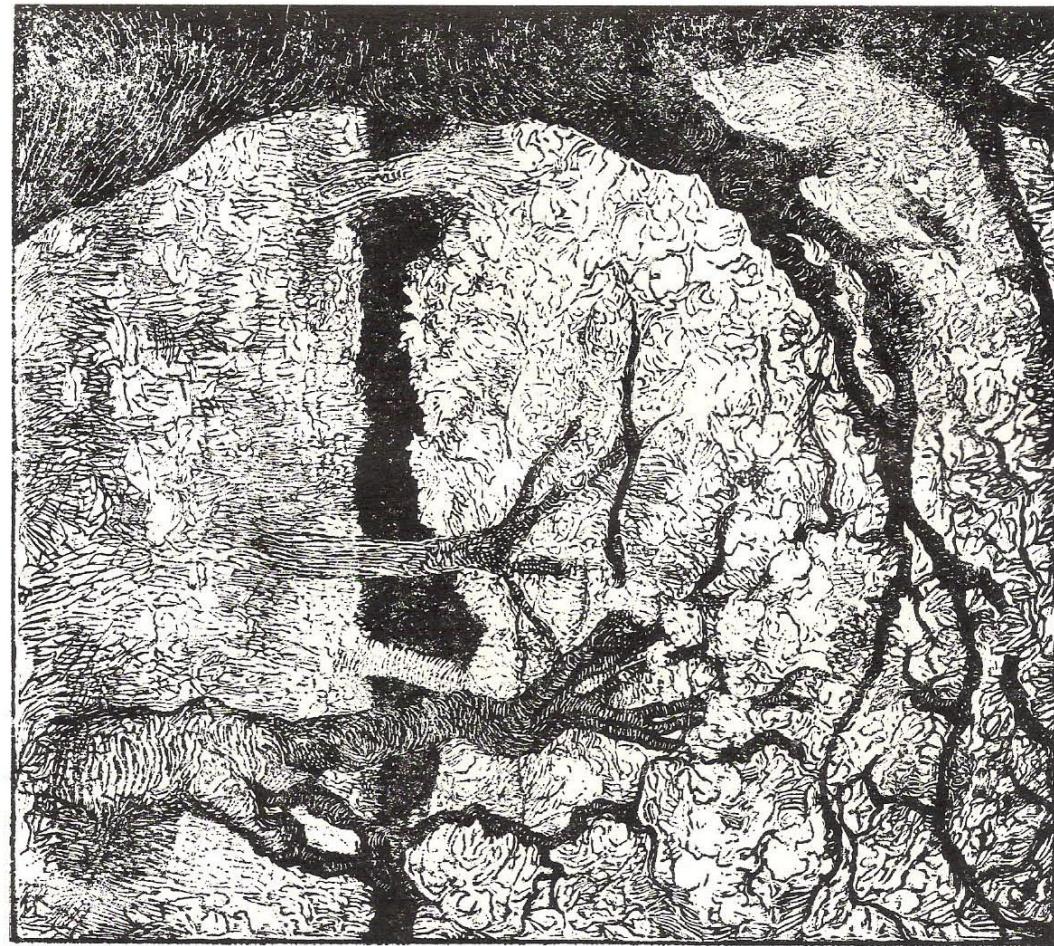
ALBERT DELSTANCHE (1870-1941). *Flanders in the Snow*.

The technique and style used by Delstanche in no way foreshadowed the development wood engraving would undergo during and after World War I. The two plates reproduced here are hardly to be distinguished from copper engravings. Massereel, Canteé, et al. would revolutionize the technique, as may be seen in the plates which follow.



ALBERT-JEAN DELSTANCHE: *Spring fields*.

Delstanche took up wood engraving shortly before the first World War. Both illustrations reproduced here are taken from his first illustrated work, "The Little Towns of Flanders", London, 1915. The poet Emile Verhaeren wrote the introduction to the English translation, praising the woodcuts "handled so tenderly and confidently".



EDGARD TYTGAT (1879). *Self portrait*

Among all the modern Belgian painters, Tytgat is the one who has most consistently practiced the art of wood engraving. His woodcuts have the same naive charm as his paintings: a folklore touch, enhanced by a whimsical humor, sets them apart in a class by themselves.



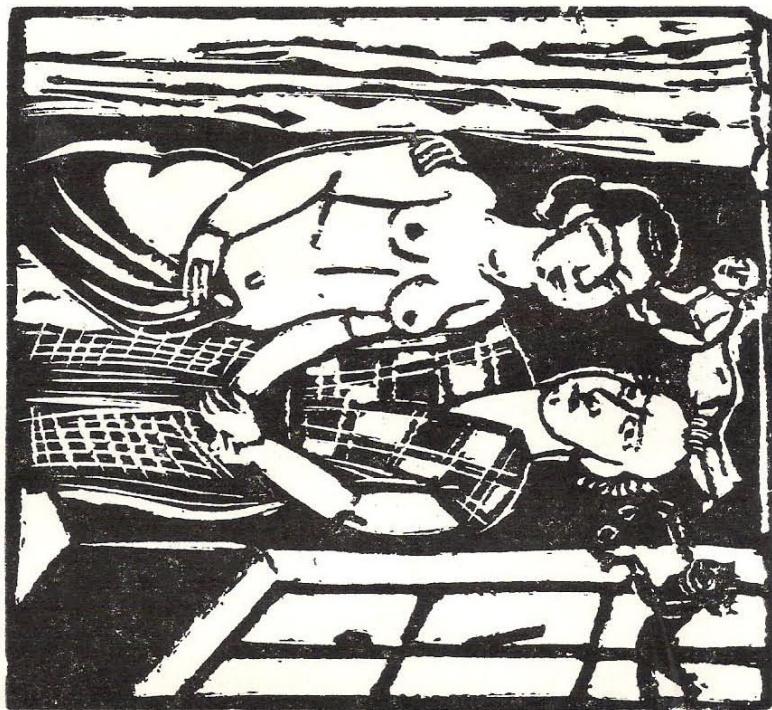
EDGARD TYTGAT: *La Roulette* (the caravan trailer). Illustration for F. Timmermans' "Driekoningentripstiek" published in American translation under the title "The Triptych of the Three Kings" by McFarlane, Warde, McFarlane, New York, 1936, with illustrations by R. Jones.



EDGARD TYTGAT: *The artist and his model.*

With utter economy of technical devices, the artist has created a scene of intimacy, representing the workshop. Through the closed window, an angel and a devil rush to the scene of peril.

18

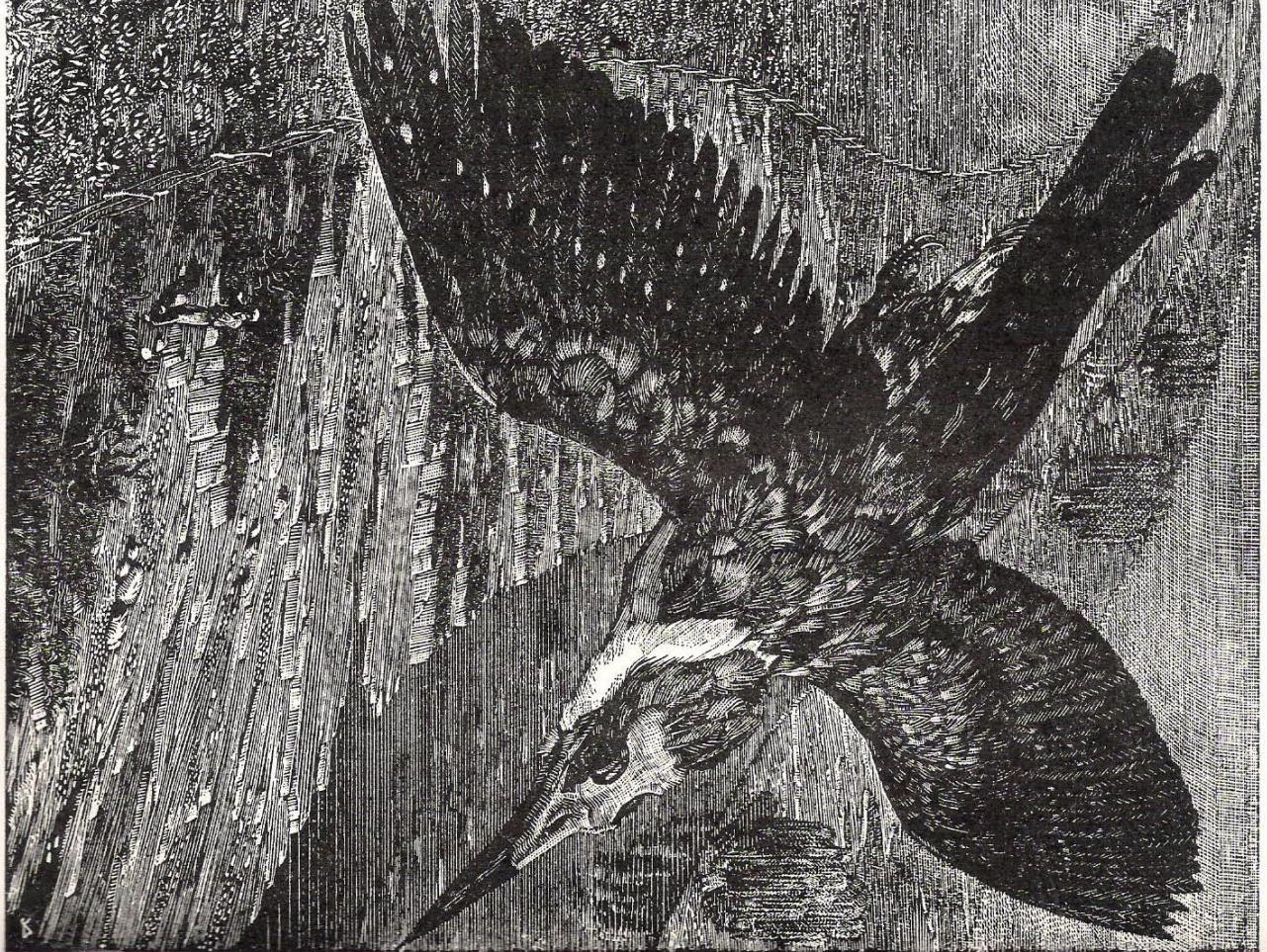


FELIX TIMMERMANS (1886-1947) : *The Three Magi.* Illustration for "Driekoningenfeest" by the artist. Lino.

Timmermans was essentially a writer, and a very successful one, having most of his works translated into many European languages, "Pallieer," and several other of his books appeared in American translation. Like Max Elskamp, he used to illustrate his own writings. Although he may have lacked technical skill, his wood and lino engravings and his pen drawings had a peculiar folk-lore charm.

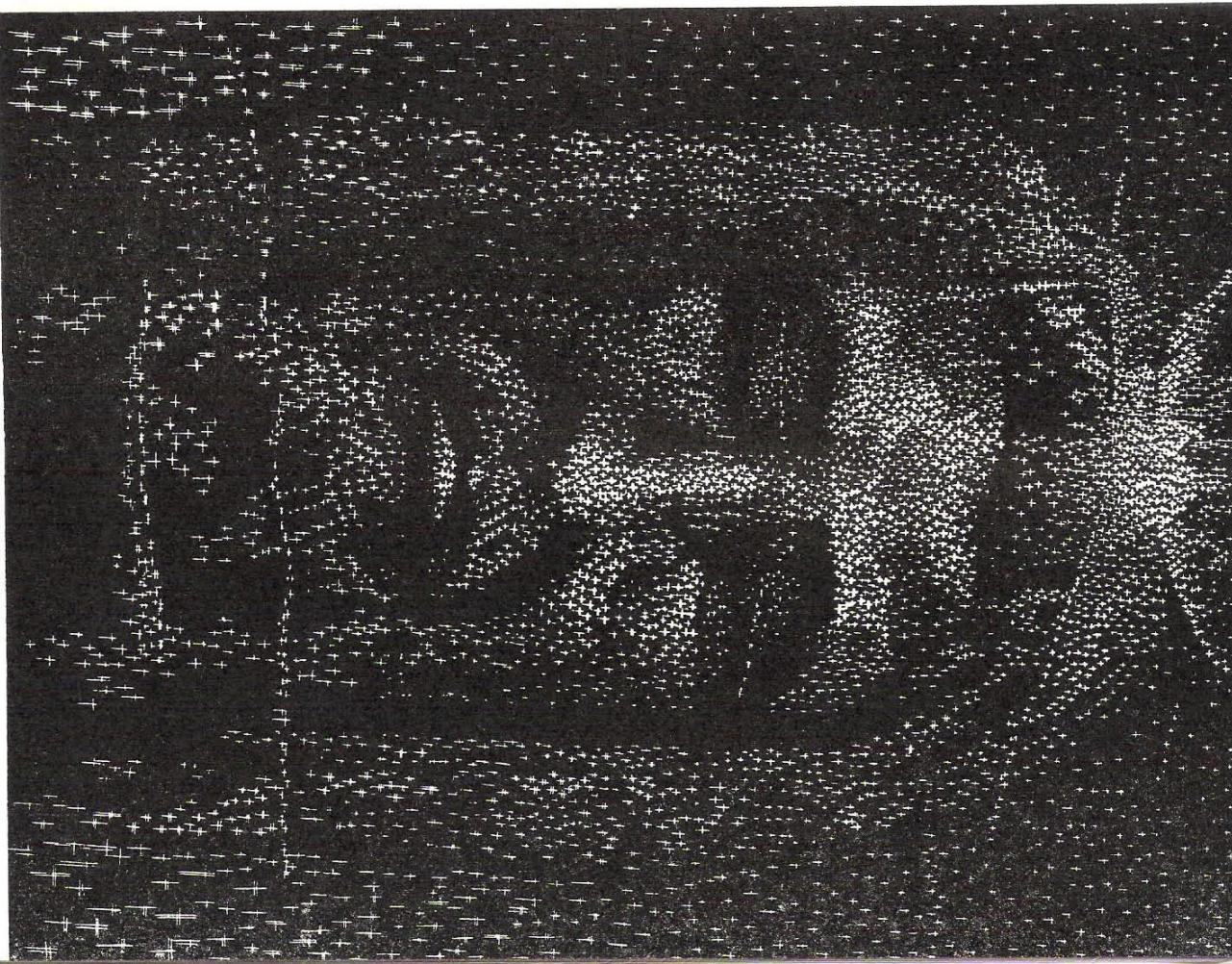
19





VICTOR DELHEZ (1901) : *The Hunt*. One of the series "Dance of Death."

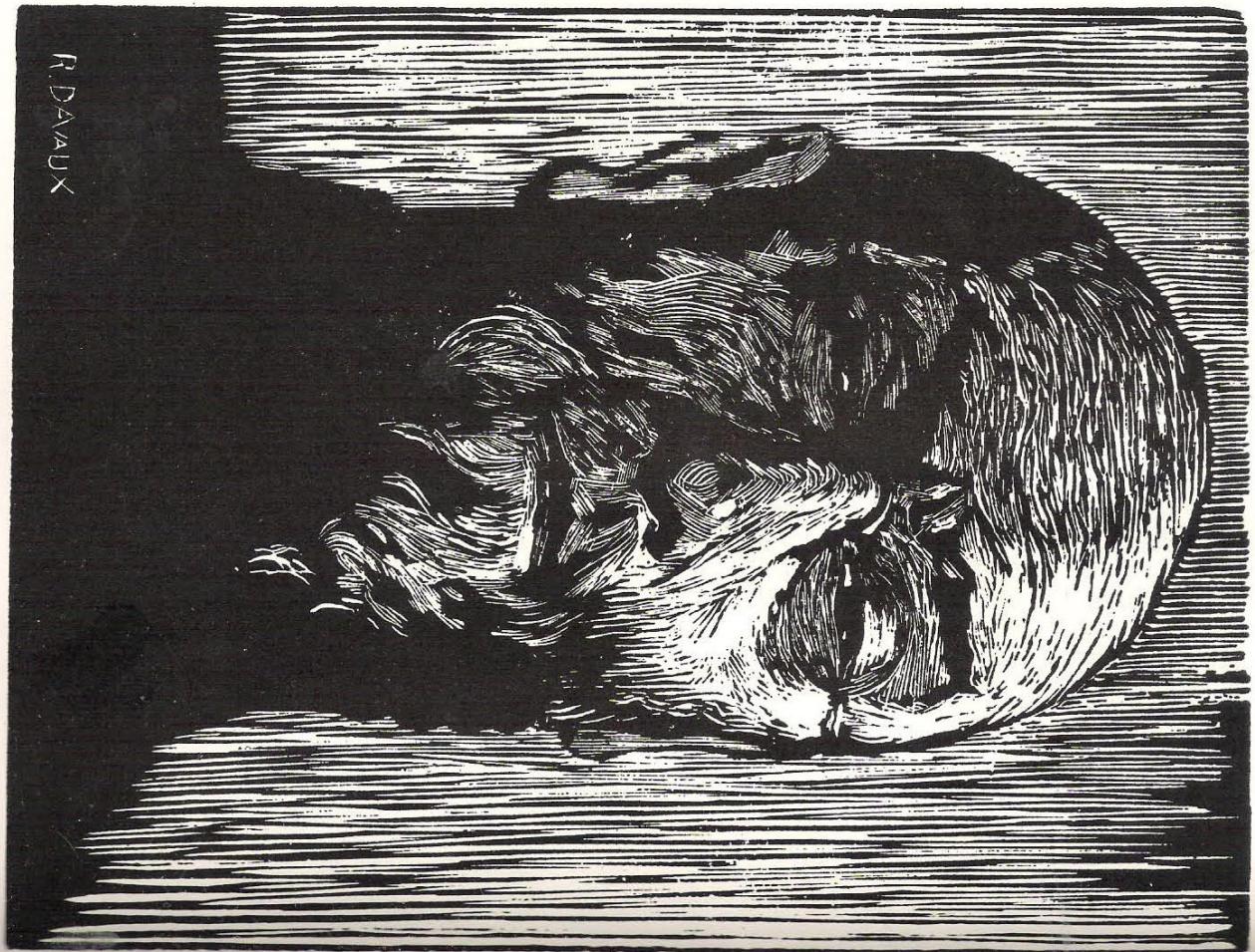
Besides his illustrations for the Gospels, Delhez made several series of woodcuts entitled "Stone," "Dance of Death," etc. His technique, although not naturalistic, reminds of the virtuoso style of Doré. His abundant fantasy inspires him to portray elaborate architecture and symbolic figures.



VICTOR DELHEZ. *Christ*. Illustration for "Los Cuatro Evangelios de Nuestro Señor Jesú Cristo," G. Kraft, Ltda., Buenos Aires, 1944.

Delhez was one of the first Belgian wood engravers to revive this art after World War I. He left for Argentina, where he has lived since then. He is now a professor at the Universidad Nacional de Cuyo. For the monumental edition of the Gospels published in 1944, he made 91 extremely detailed xylographic illustrations.

R. DAVAUX



ROBERT DAVAUX: *Old Man*.

After completing his studies at the Brussels Academy, Davaux established himself in Paris. His work is often inspired by literary motives. His style is pure and strong.

JAN-FRANS CANTRE (1886-1931). *Old Man*.

With his brother Jozef, Jan-Frans Cantré was one of the revivers of wood engraving in Belgium after the First World War. His style is not less forceful than that of his brother. His work comprises a great number of purely illustrative woodcuts.



JAN-FRANS CANTRE: *The Musicians*.

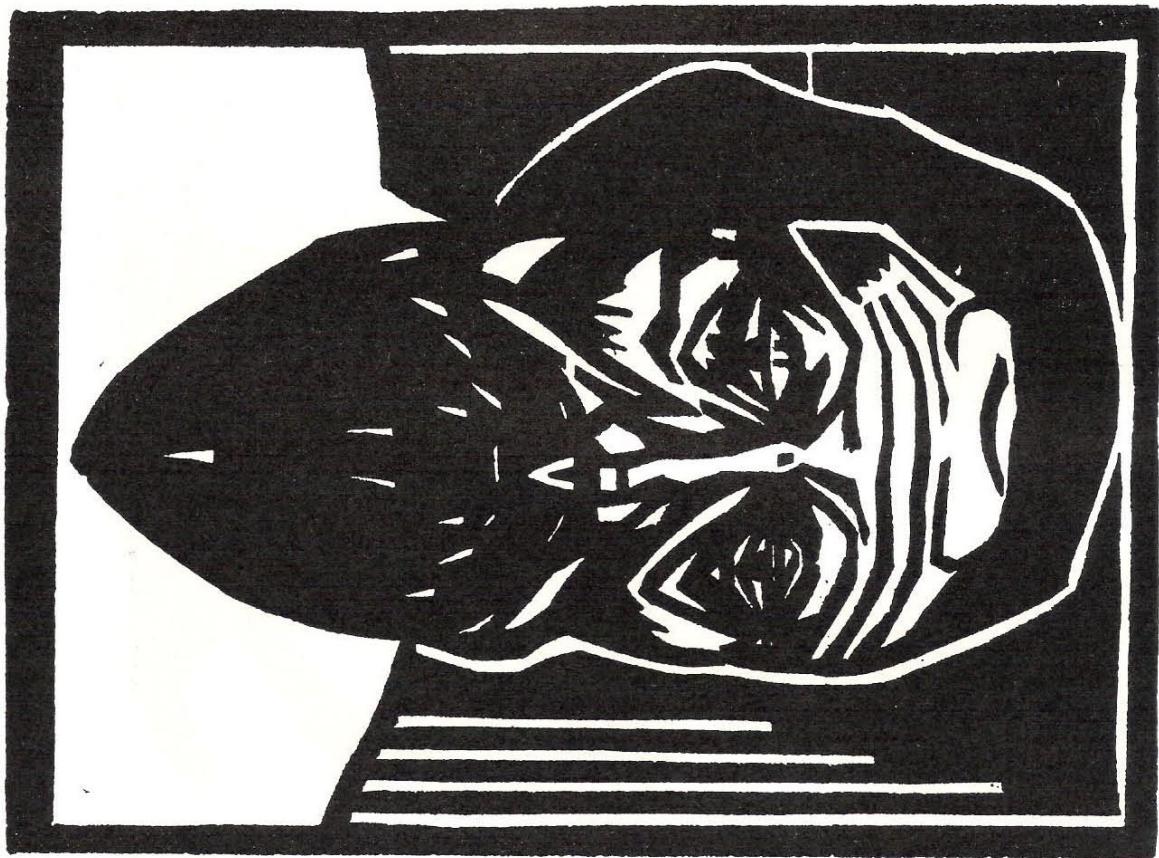
The influence of J. F. Cautré upon the woodcutters of Belgium in the twenties was considerable: it was due mainly to the utter simplicity of his style and to his unfailing technique.



24

EDWARD MOREELS (1898). *Old Man*.

After a period during which Moreels was under the influence of his elder, Jozef Cautré, he developed his own personality which shows clearly in the well constructed and eloquent woodcut above reproduced.



25

FRANS MASEREEL (1889). *The Rebel*.

About Maserel, David Aladar wrote, "There can be no discussion of the modern woodcut in which F. Maserel does not occupy the central place. He is so far above the ordinary run of artists that we have had to see him with unused eyes. Maserel stands alone."



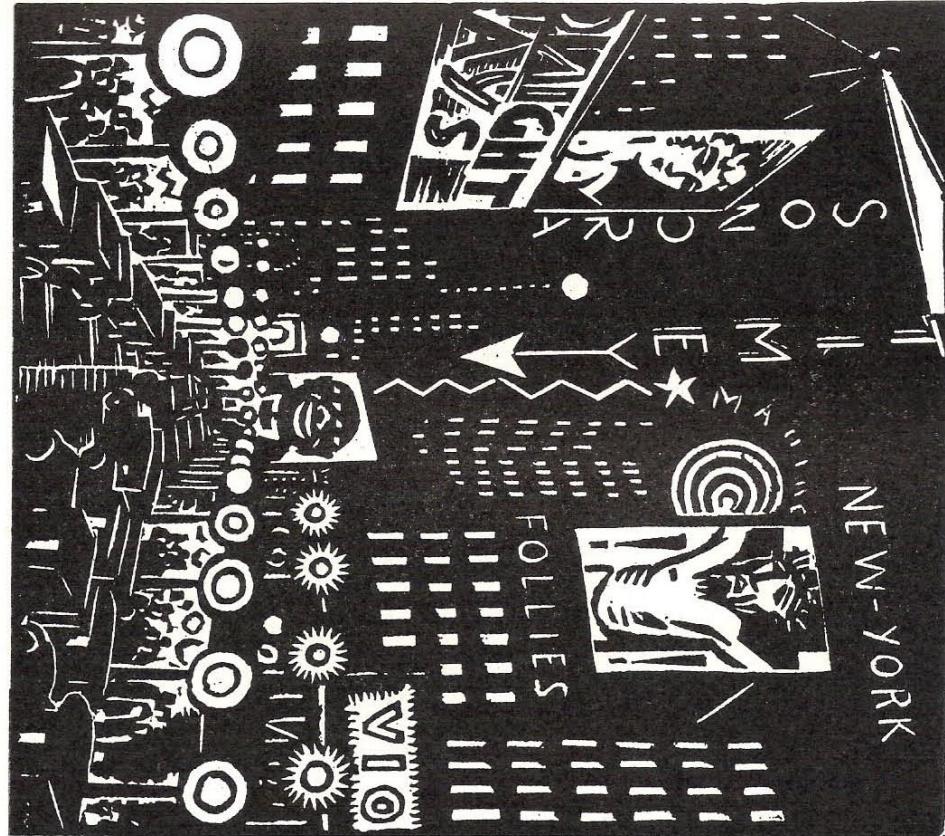
FRANS MASEREEL: Illustration for *The Ballad of Reading Goal* by O. Wilde. Ed. Methuen & Co., London, 1925.

FRANS MASEREEL: *The Marketplace of Bruges*. Illustration for Ch. De Coster's: *The Glorious Adventures of Tyl Ulenspiegel*, N. Y., 1943. For Charles De Coster's classic book, Maserel made more than a hundred woodcuts which magnificently illustrate this epic tale of Belgium's resistance against Spanish tyranny in the 16th century.



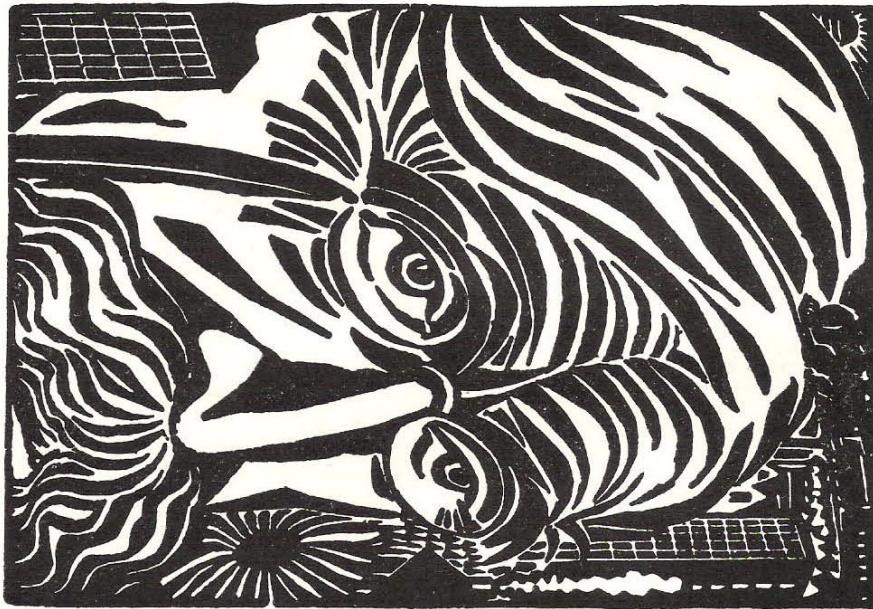
FRANS MASEREEL: *Times Square*.

It is doubtful that Maserel ever visited New York, but Times Square as a landmark is a symbol all over the world. Maserel's ideological trend is manifested here in the brutal opposition of the two recurrent elements in his art: a mystical attitude towards life constantly warred against by sexual obsession.



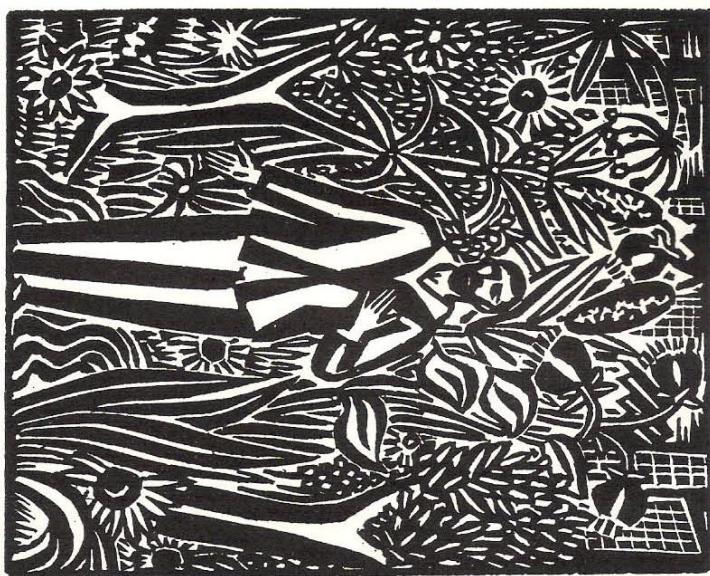
FRANS MASEREEL: *Portrait of Emile Verhaeren.*

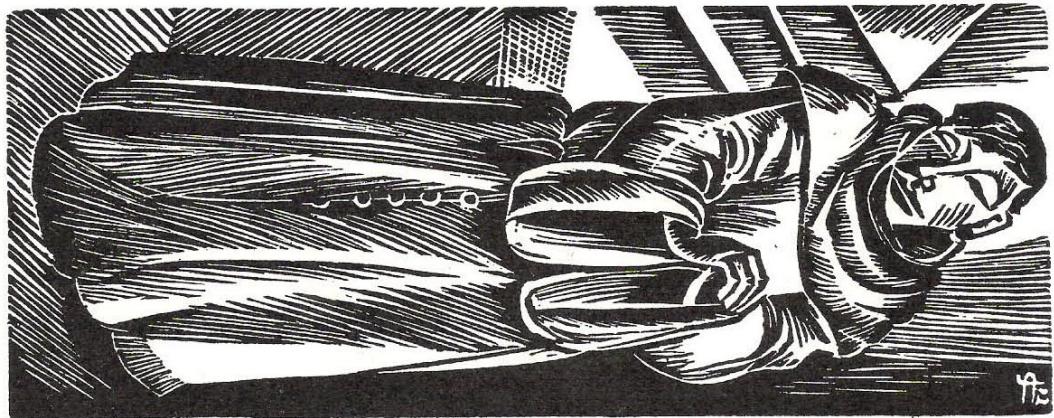
The ideological attitude of the artist, which nearly always permeates his work, does not detract from the artistic enjoyment of this powerful and striking likeness. Verhaeren introduced into Belgian letters Walt Whitman's lyrical enthusiasm for modern industrial society.



FRANS MASEREEL: *"In paths unrodden . . ."*

For Léon Bazalgette's translation of Walt Whitman's *Calamus* (Geneva 1919), Masereel made a series of remarkable illustrations.





JOZEF CANTRÉ (1890) : Illustration for "Eickerlyc."

Cantré made about 40 cuts for a modernized version of the old Flemish play "Eickerlyc" (Everyman). They appear on every page beside the text.

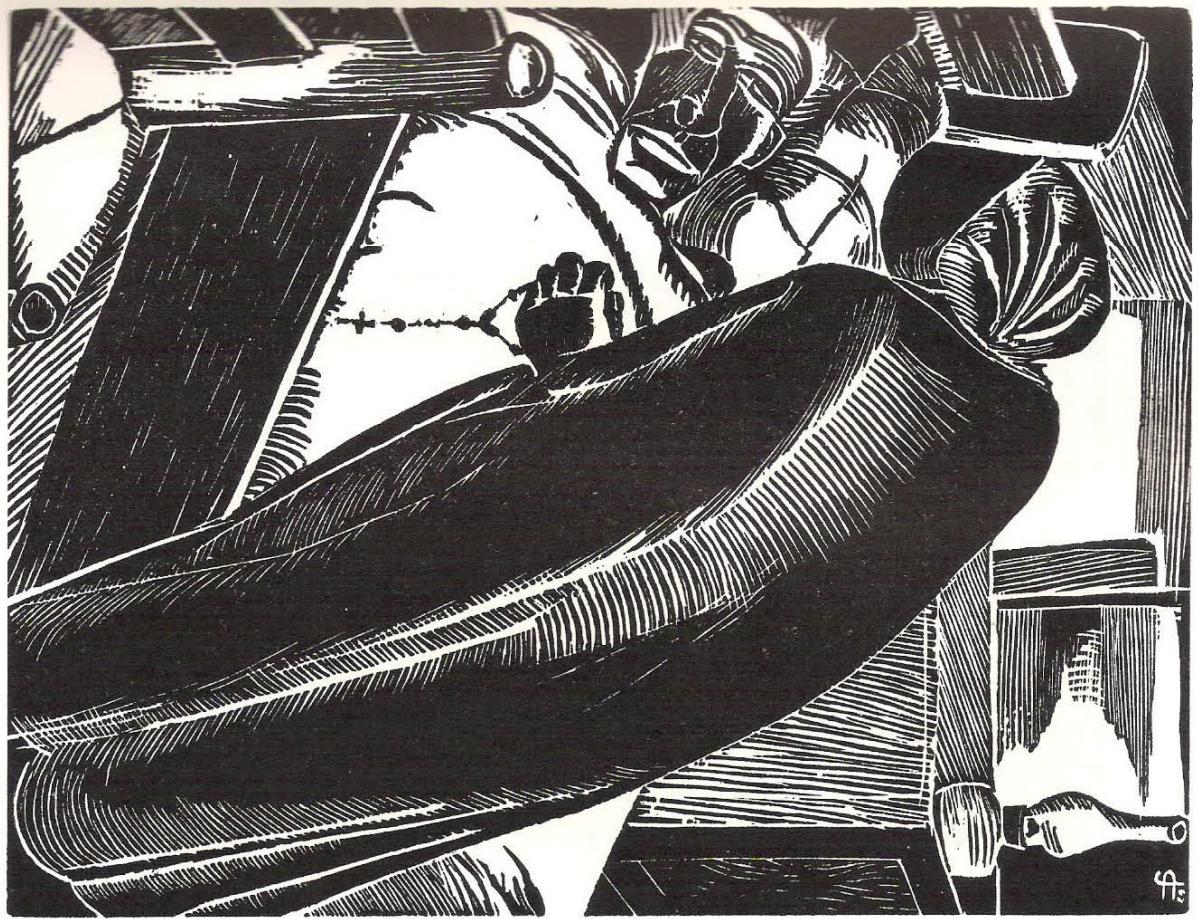


JOZEF CANTRÉ: *The farmer dying*. Illustration for Karel van de Woestijne's "De Boer die Sterft," Antwerp, 1937.

For the earthly and magnificent prose of the greatest Dutch-writing Belgian of our time, Cantré made a series of illustrations which have the flavor and the strength of Flemish rural atmosphere.



JOZEF CANTRE. Illustration for "Eckerlyc."  
In this woodcut "Everyman" appears menaced by his doom.



JOZEF CANTRE: *The farmer dying*. Illustration for Karel van de Woestijne's "De Boer die Sterft," Antwerp, 1937.  
This woodcut represents the dying farmer confronted with the spirit of his mother.

## WILLEM ELSSCHOT



HENRI VAN STRATEN (1892-1944). Illustration for "Kaas"  
by W. Elsschot.

Van Straten's work consists mainly of illustrations for novels. He freed himself early of Maserel's artistic influence, but like Maserel, he always had a moralistic tendency; he was a critic of his time. The above illustration shows the hero of a novel, a "white-collar worker" who tries hard to become a cheese merchant, but who fails and rushes back to the safety of his former job.



JOZEF CANTRE: *The Flying Dutchman*.

This woodcut is an illustration for the poem "De Vliegende Hollander," by the Dutch poet Hendrik Marsman.

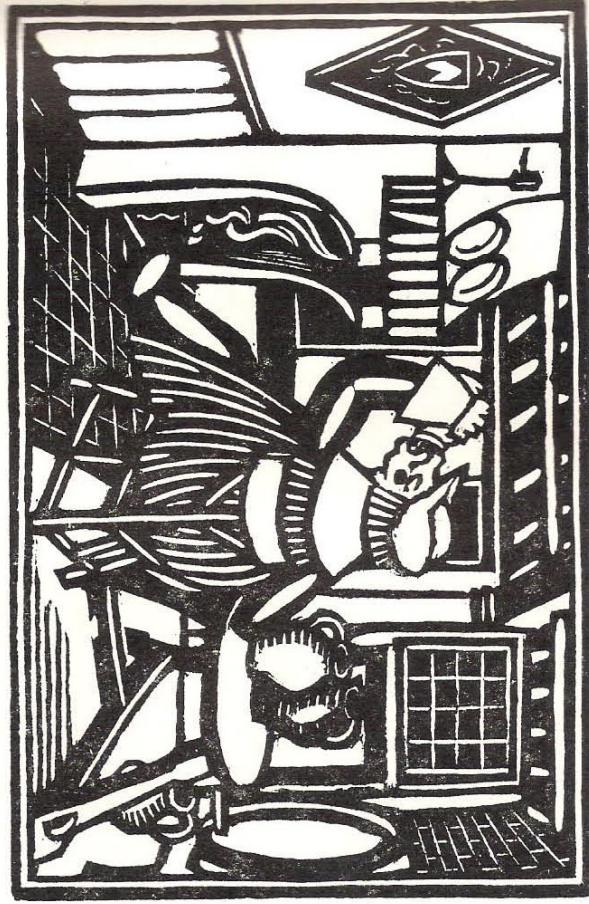
HENRI VAN STRATEN: Illustration for "Reinaert de Vos" by Hubert Melis.

Van Straaten illustrated several classic texts, such as De Coster's "Ulenspiegel" and the writings of Joachim du Bellay and Francois Villon. His style is simple and strong, averse to detail and to anything that might make a woodcut look like anything but a woodcut.



HENRI VAN STRATEN: *The Drinker*.

Although van Straaten often treated medieval subjects, he constantly escaped the danger of making pastiches of the 15th century art but he gave to every one of his illustrations a strong personal character.



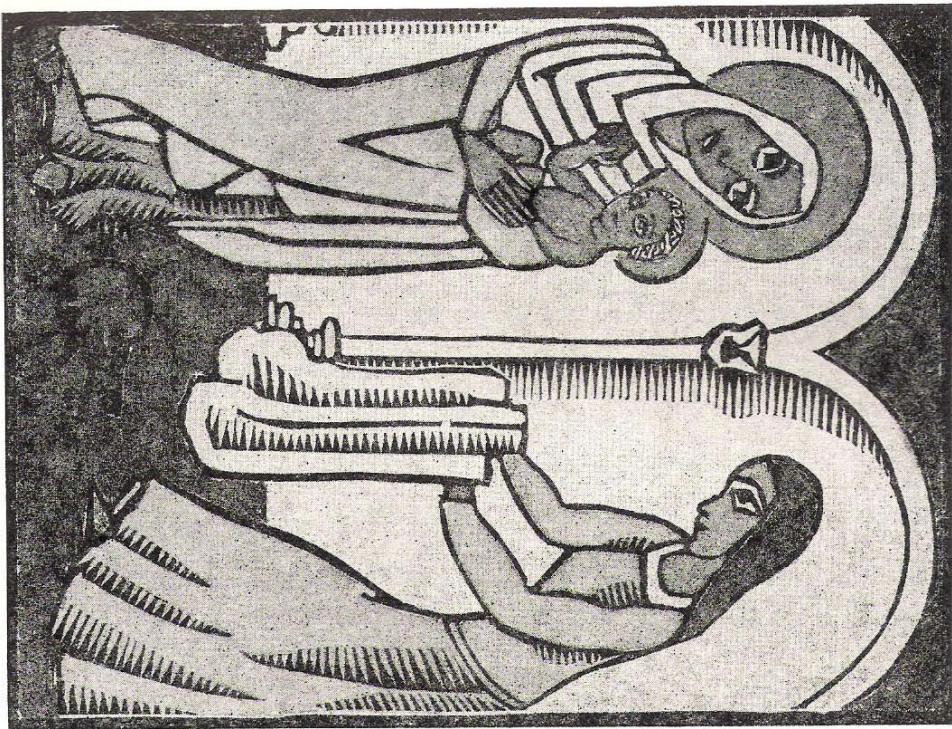


DENS MARTIN: *Le plus grand bar du monde*.  
An illustration for the story by that name of the French novelist Paul Morand.

40

VICTOR STRUYVAERT (1897). Illustration for "Beatrice," by Robert Guillette, Antwerp, 1931.

Struyvaert's art has developed along the lines of Gothic inspiration. The above woodcut is an illustration for the French translation of a classical medieval poem of Flanders, one of the treasures of Dutch literature. The legend deals with the story of the vergeress.



41

VICTOR STUYVAERT: Illustration for *It Dawmeth in the East*.

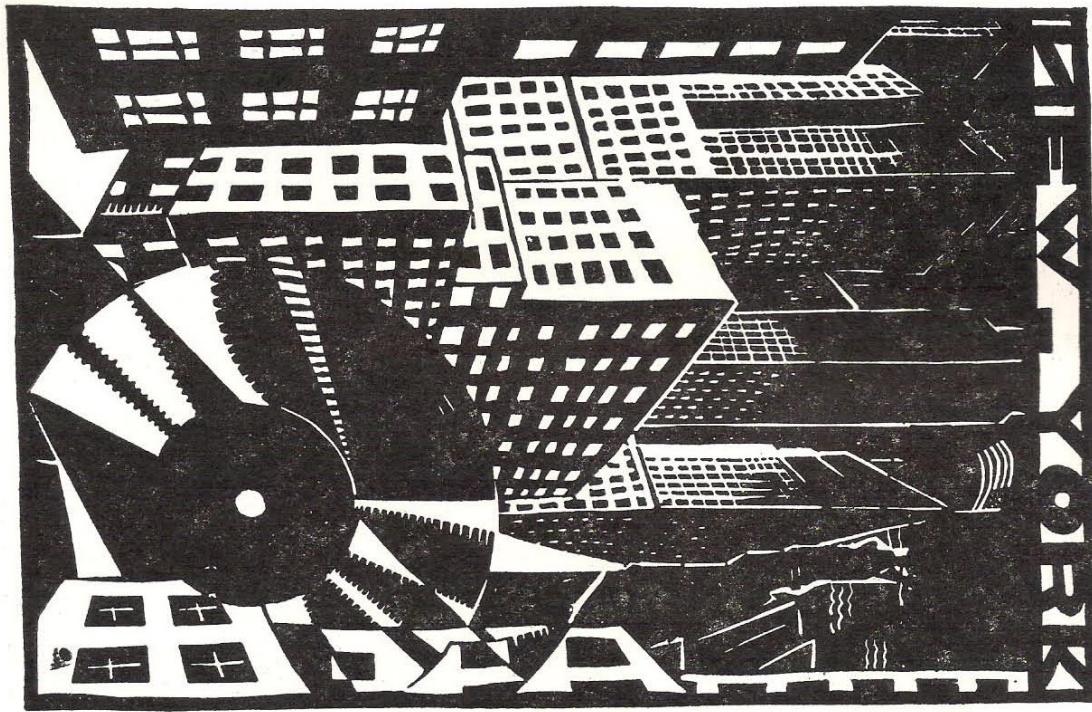
This old Flemish ballad was translated by James Neill Norhe for the Saunders Studio Press, Claremont, California, 1936.



42

ALBERT DROESBEKE (1896-1929) : *New York*, color engraving.

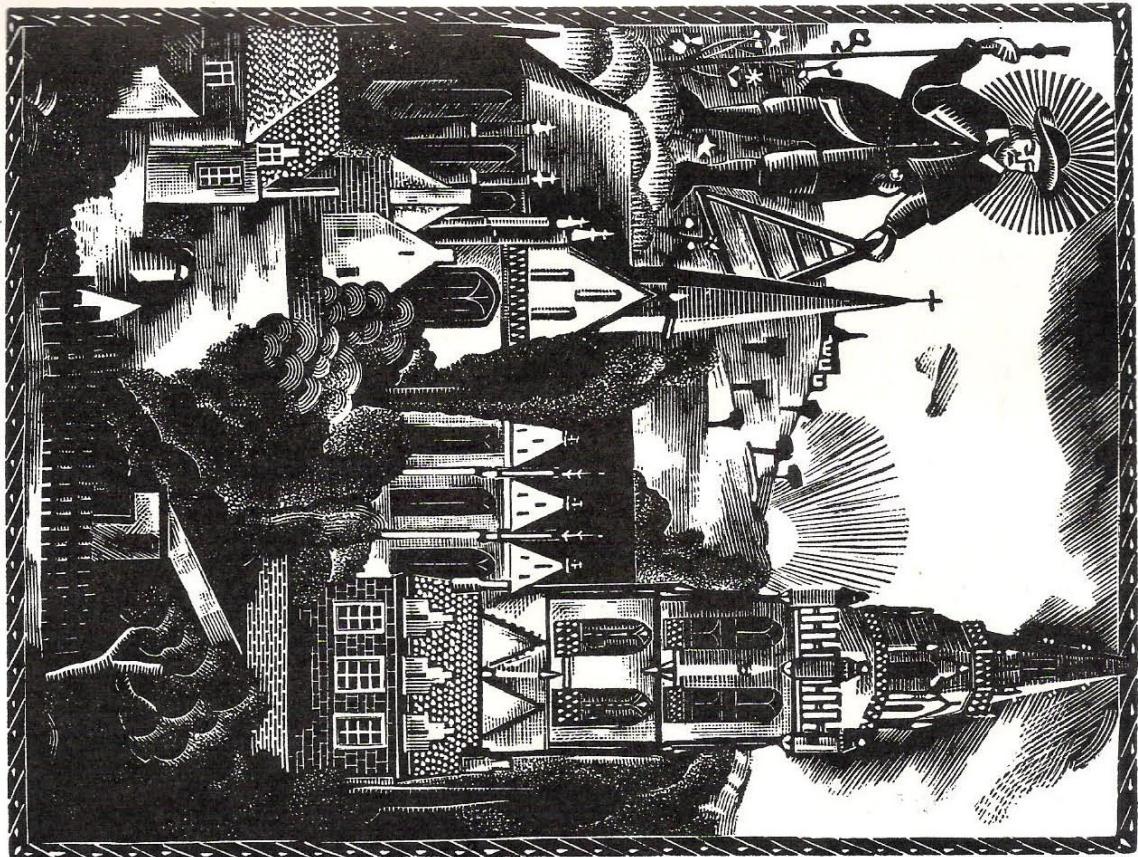
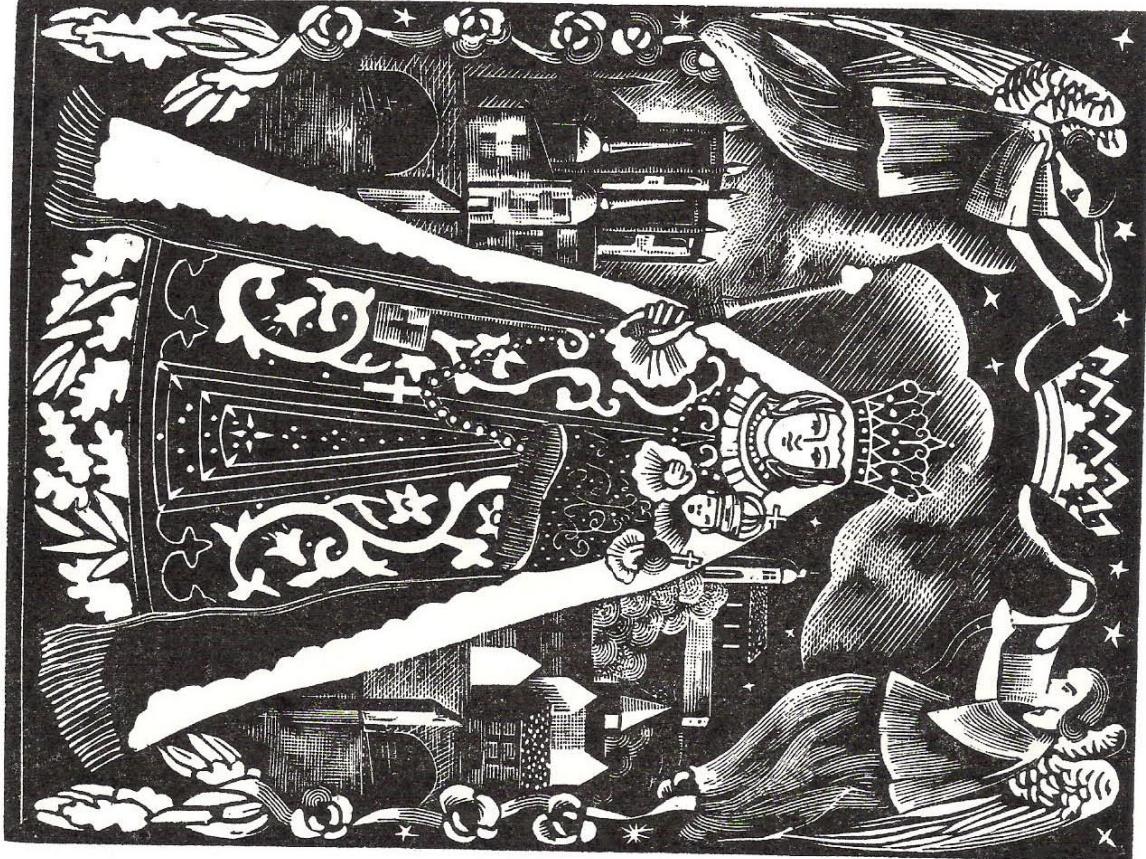
His early death prevented Droesbeke from attaining his full stature. He contributed to the renaissance of woodcutting after the first World War. He did book illustrations and published, in 1922, a very striking illustrated *Atlas de Géographie*.



43

MAURICE BROCAS (1892-1948). *Our Lady of Sarie*. Illustration for Ernest Claes, "Toen Onze-Lieve-Vrouwke heuren Beweg deed," Brussels-Maastricht, 1933.

For this book, which deals with the popular devotion to the Virgin in different Belgian towns, Brocas made a number of full page illustrations and small motives. His technique is to be compared with that of the popular imagerie of devotional character. It also comes close to the more popular technique of Elskamp (see pp. 11, 12, 13)



MAURICE BROCAS: *Saint Roch and the Church of Alsemberg*. Illustration for "Toen Onze-Lieve-Vrouwke heuren Beweg deed,"

GUSTAVE DE SMET (1877-1943) : *The Mower*.

G. De Smet was one of the outstanding painters of the modern school in Belgium. Like many of his colleagues he tried his hand at woodcutting and achieved signal success.



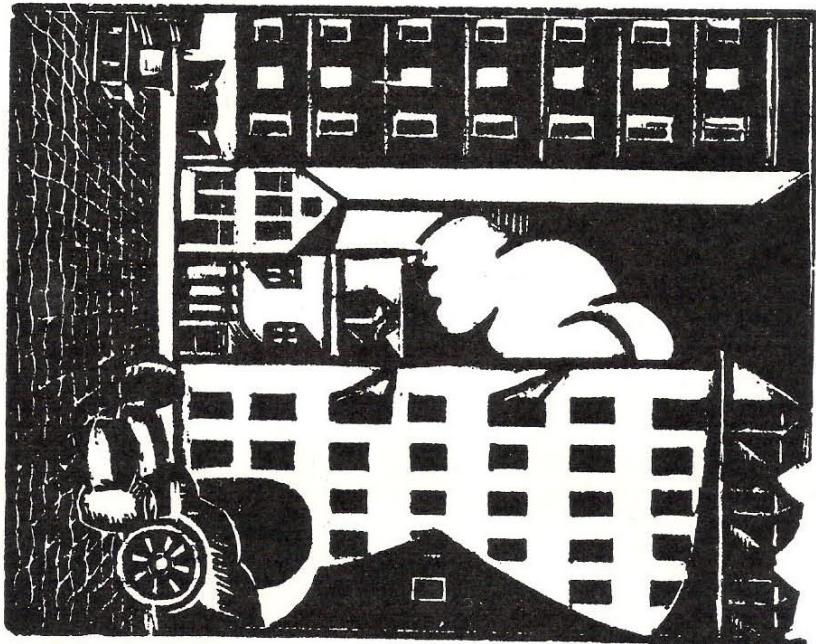
GUSTAVE DE SMET: *Woman*.

De Smet's qualities as a painter undoubtedly transpire in this woodcut. It is strongly constructed like all his canvases and at the same time very sensitive in its details.



JORIS MINNE (1897). *Impression of Antwerp*.

Minne is a professor of Graphic Arts at the National Institute of Fine Arts, Brussels. Together with the brothers, Jan-Frans and Jozef Cantré, and with Maserel, he contributed to the revival of wood engraving in Belgium in the early twenties.



JORIS MINNE: *The Bridge*.

In "500 Years of Art and Illustration" (Cleveland, N. Y., 1942) Howard Simon praises Minne's "excellence achieved through the artist's bold use of simple cutting with a knife." The above woodcut is good proof of the correctness of this appreciation.



FRANS ERMENGERM (1893) : Illustration for *Erato*.

Ermengem is essentially an illustrator. For a series of poems by Ch. Baudelaire, he cut twelve plates, of which the above is one. His technique, although less forceful than Maserel's or Cantré's, is based on strong contrasts and a great sense of volume.



LEMPEREUR-HAUT (1898) : *The snake*.

Few wood engravers in Belgium have been so faithful to the true spirit of their art as Lempereur-Haut. Utter simplicity of style and great strength characterize his compositions.



DESIRÉ ACKET (1905). Illustration for Guido Gezelle:  
*De XVI Stonden. Antwerp. No date.*

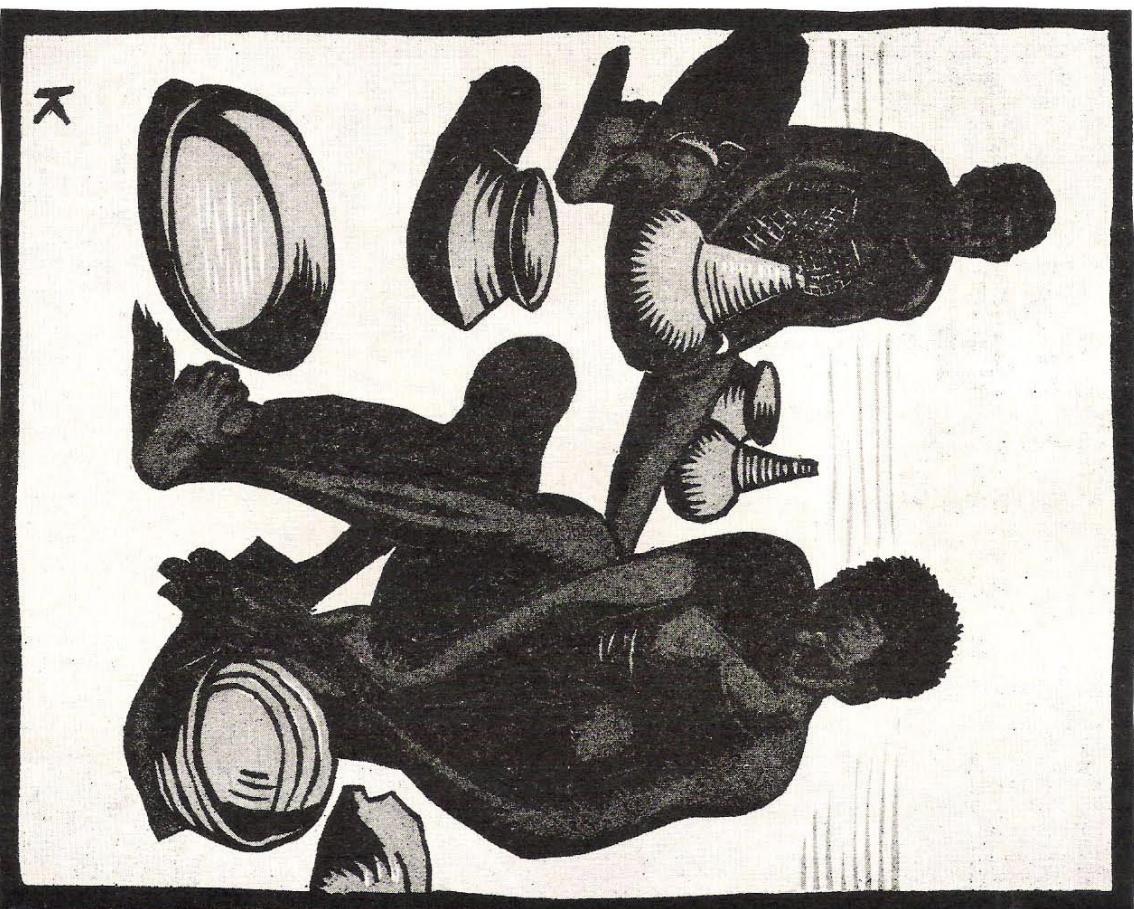
Acket is one of the promising talents of the young school of woodcutters in Belgium. His style is sober and has a tendency to classicism.



DESIRÉ ACKET: *The Way of the Cross.*

Illustration for Guido Gezelle: *De XIV Stonden of de Bloedige Dagvaart ons Heeren. Antwerp.*





HENRI KERELS (1896). *Women Potters*. From "Congo Arts and Trades," Brussels, 1939. Color engraving.

After illustrating a number of books, Kereels spent a long time in the Belgian Congo. His technique became simpler, his sense of construction stronger. The plate reproduced above belongs to a series representing Congolese handicrafts.

54



MAURICE VAN ESSCHE (1906) : *Negro Girl*.  
The Congo has inspired several Belgian woodcutters since the first World War. Van Essche is among them, although his main work is painting.

55

ANTOON HERCKENRATH (1907) : *The Jockey*.  
Among the representatives of the younger generation of woodcutters, Herckenrath is one of the most outstanding and certainly the most productive.



ANTOON HERCKENRATH: *The Mover*.  
His style is personal and monumental in the true spirit of his medium. His subject matter is usually derived from local sources. He has also worked successfully as an illustrator.



F. A. COSYNS (1875) : *The Bathers*.

Cosyns lives in Paris where he has illustrated a great number of books. He also made a series of woodcuts for the *Apocalypse* and for the *Contes de Naug-Tran-Trull*.



PAUL DAXHELET (1905) : *The Barker*.

Much more deeply influenced by the French School of wood engraving than his Flemish confreres, Daxhelet is one of the outstanding Walloon artists. He illustrated Poe's tales. He now teaches at the Academy of Fine Arts in Liège.



LUC DE JAEGHER (1912) : *Self Portrait*. Color engraving.

Among the younger woodcutters, De Jaegher has worked along traditional lines. He has illustrated a great number of books, among others *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.



JAN MULDER (1897) : *Sunday Afternoon*.

Mulder was originally a painter, but turned to woodcutting under the direction of V. Stuyvaert (see pp. 41, 42). The above reproduced woodcut has been considerably reduced in size.



PIERRE DE VAUCLEROY (1905) : *Landscape*.

His work is always very decorative and rivals in grace and charm the best of the French School to which he is artistically related, rather than to the more energetic and forceful Flemish School.

62



NELLY DEGOUY (1910) : *The Poacher*.

Miss Degouy's work is mainly illustrative. The above reproduction does not entirely do justice to the refinement of her style and technique.

63



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### A. GENERAL

W. M. Conway: *The Woodcutters of the Netherlands in the Fifteenth Century*. Cambridge, 1884.

A. J. J. Delen: *Histoire de la Gravure dans les anciens Pays-Bas et dans les provinces belges*. Brussels, 1924-34.

Sander Pierron: *La Xylographie belge contemporaine*. Brussels, 1931.

Roger Avermaete: *La Gravure sur bois moderne de l'Occident*. Paris, 1927.

R. J. Beedham: *Wood Engraving*. London, 1941.

L. Lebeer: *De Vlaamsche Houtsnede*. Bruges, 1927.

F. van den Weyngaert: *De Moderne Vlaamsche Houtsnijkunst*. Antwerp, 1928.

### B. MONOGRAPHS

Louis Piérard: *Un poète de la vie populaire: Max Elskamp*. Antwerp.

N. E. Mariën: *Victor Suyvaert, houtsnijder en miniaturist*. Ghent, no date.

K. Horemans: *Antoon Herckenrath*. Diest, no date.

Marnix Gijser: *Jozef Cantré, houtsnijder*. Brussels, 1938.

Gerard Walschap: *Jan-Frans Cantré*. Antwerp, 1932.

A. Holitscher and S. Zweig: *Masereel*. Berlin, 1923.

L. Lebeer: *Edgard Tytgat, graveur*. Brussels, 1937.



ALBERT VAN HOLSBECK (1877) : *Pietà*. Color woodcut.

The remarkable technique of van Holsbeeck may have been influenced by the fact that, for a long time, he used to draw cartoons for tapestries. The mono-tone reproduction of the above woodcut, of course, detracts somewhat from its great value.

Acket, Désiré	p. 52, 53	Herckenrath, Antoon	p. 56, 57
Brocas, Maurice	p. 44, 45	Lempereur-Haut	p. 51
Cantré, Jan-Frans	p. 23, 24	Kerels, H.	p. 54
Cantré, Jozef	p. 32, 33, 34, 35, 36	Martin, Denis	p. 40
Clæsens, Jan	p. 10	Masereel, Frans	p. 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31
Cosyns, F. A.	p. 58	Minne, George	p. 49
Davaux, Robert	p. 22	Minne, Joris	p. 3, 4
Daxhelet, Paul	p. 53	Moreels, E.	p. 25
Degouy, Nelly	p. 63	Mulder, Jan	p. 61
Delbœz, Victor	p. 20, 21	Pellens, Edward	p. 8, 9
Delstanche, Albert-Jean	p. 14, 15	Stuyaert, Victor	p. 41, 42
De Jaegher, Luc	p. 60	Timmermans, Felix	p. 9
De Smet, Gustave	p. 47	Tytgat, Edgard	p. 16, 17, 18
Doudelet, Charles	p. 5, 7	van de Velde, Henry	p. 2
Droesbeke, Albert	p. 43	Van Essche, Maurice	p. 55
Elstkamp, Max	p. 11, 12, 13	van Holsbeeck, Albert	p. 64
Ernengem, Frans	p. 50	van Straten, Henri	p. 37, 38, 39
		Vaucleroy, Pierre de	p. 62

Transmitted by the Belgian Government Information Center, 630 Fifth Avenue, New York 20, N. Y., which is registered with the Foreign Agents Registration Section, Department of Justice, Washington, D. C., as an agent of the Belgian Government, Brussels, Belgium. A copy of this material is being filed with the Department of Justice, where the registration statement of the Belgian Foreign Office is available for inspection. Registration under the Belgian Foreign Office is available for inspection. Registration under the Foreign Agents Registration Act does not indicate approval or disapproval of this material by the United States Government.

ART, LIFE AND SCIENCE IN BELGIUM, FIRST SERIES No. 15

Already published in this series:

1. BELGIAN MUSIC, by *Charles Leirens*, 3rd Edition
2. BELGIAN COLONIAL POLICY, by *Albert de Vleeschauwer*  
(out of print)
3. A DEMOCRACY IN ACTION, by *Nico Gunzburg*, 2nd Edition
4. BELGIAN LETTERS, by *Jan-Albert Goris*, 3rd Edition
5. THE GROWTH OF THE BELGIAN NATION, by *Jan-Albert Goris*, 5th Edition
6. MODERN BELGIAN ARCHITECTURE, by *Hugo Van Kuyck*,  
2nd Edition (out of print)
7. BELGIAN FOLKLORE, by *Charles Leirens*, 3rd Edition
8. MODERN PAINTING IN BELGIUM, by *Alex Salkin*,  
3rd Edition
9. MODERN SCULPTURE IN BELGIUM, by *Jan-Albert Goris*,  
2nd Edition
10. NEGRO ART IN BELGIAN CONGO, by *Léon Kochnitzky*,  
3rd Edition
11. BELLS OVER BELGIUM, by *Kamiel Lefévere*, 3rd Edition
12. PORTRAITS BY FLEMISH MASTERS IN AMERICAN  
COLLECTIONS, by *Jan-Albert Goris*, 2nd Edition  
(out of print)
13. ADOLPHE SAX AND HIS SAXOPHONE,  
by *Léon Kochnitzky* (out of print)
14. MODERN BELGIAN HANDICRAFTS, by *Richard Zondervan*  
(out of print)
15. MODERN BELGIAN WOOD ENGRAVERS,  
by *Jan-Albert Goris*, 2nd Edition
16. A TEN YEAR PLAN FOR THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL  
DEVELOPMENT OF THE BELGIAN CONGO,  
by *Pierre Wigny*, 2nd Edition
17. SOCIAL ACTION AND WELFARE IN BELGIUM,  
by *B. Hollants*, 2nd Edition
18. LYRA BELGICA I, by *Clark and Frances Stillman*
19. THE BELGIAN THEATER SINCE 1890, by *Suzanne Lilar*
20. MODERN BELGIAN ETCHERS AND COPPER  
ENGRAVERS, by *A. J. J. Delen*
21. DRAWINGS BY MODERN BELGIAN ARTISTS,  
by *Jan-Albert Goris*
22. LYRA BELGICA II, by *Clark and Frances Stillman*
23. ART TREASURES OF BELGIUM, by *Marguerite Devigne*
24. A TEN YEAR PLAN FOR THE BELGIAN TRUST  
TERRITORY OF RUANDA-URUNDI
25. U. S. ASSISTANCE TO BELGIUM AND LUXEMBOURG  
AND THEIR PART IN EUROPEAN RECOVERY